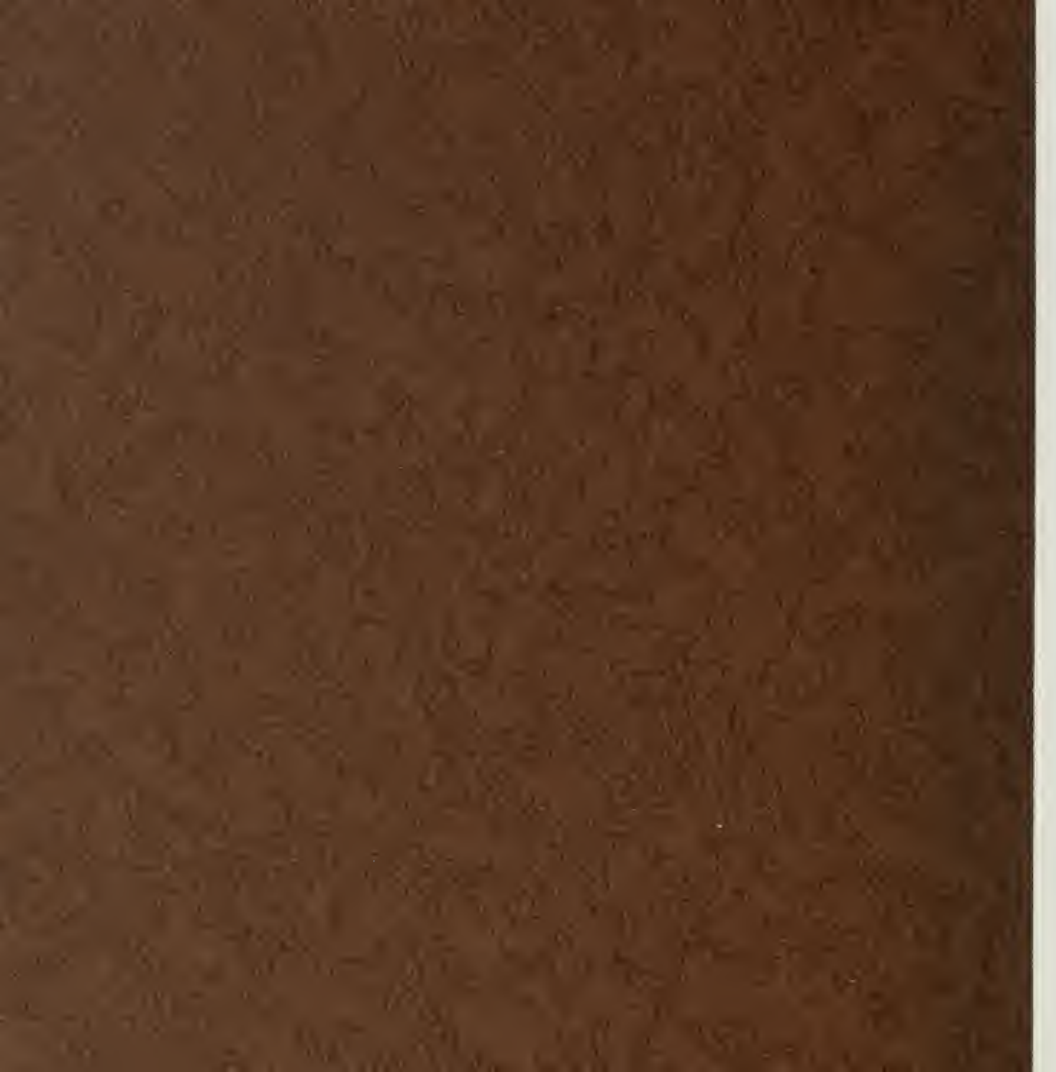


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The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*

Edited by
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
and H. L. MENCKEN

A NOTE
TO AUTHORS



LOAN STACK

A NOTE TO AUTHORS

THE aim of The Smart Set, in general, is to interest and amuse the more civilized and sophisticated sort of reader—the man or woman who has lived in large cities, and read good books, and seen good plays, and heard good music, and is tired of politicians, reformers and the newspapers. It is not what is known as a popular magazine; it hasn't a circulation of 1,000,000 a month, and it never will have. This fact frees it from any necessity to take a hand in the uplift, or to pretend that it is made sad by the sorrows of the world. It assumes that its typical reader, having a quarter in his pocket to spend for a magazine without either gaudy pictures in it or "inspirational" rubbish, is quite satisfied with both the world and himself, and that even if he isn't, there are times when he doesn't want to worry over schemes of improvement. It is at such times that The Smart Set tries to reach him. It offers him, on a small scale, the kind of intelligent entertainment that such a play as Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" offers him on a large scale, or Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" on a still larger scale.

That is, as we have said, it *tries* to do so. The fact that it often falls a good deal short



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is one to which we are already painfully privy. We do the best we can with the means at hand. If Joseph Conrad's "Youth" were yet unpublished, and if Conrad offered it to us tomorrow, we'd mortgage our salaries to buy it, and stop the presses to get it into the next number. For Anatole France's "The Revolt of the Angels" we'd do the same. Or for anything by Arthur Schnitzler as good as "Anatol." Or for a play by Lord Dunsany comparable to "The Green Gods from the Mountains." Or (supposing it new) for John Millington Synge's "Riders from the Sea." Or for one of John Masefield's sea songs. Or for a ballad by Otto Julius Bierbaum. Or for an essay by Walter Pater. Or for a single epigram by Oscar Wilde. . . . Failing such masterpieces, we take the next best that offers, and whether that next best be by so well-known a man as Dunsany or Dreiser, or by some clever youth just out of college, it is all one to us. We read personally every piece of printable manuscript that comes into this office, and we are unfeignedly delighted every time a new-comer sends in something that is good.

With this programme, it must be plain that we do *not* want the conventional sentimentality of the cheap magazines, the rubber-stamp stuff that presents old ideas, old situations, old points of view. For example, we don't want war stories; they were all written when Zola wrote "The Attack on the Mill,"

and the best of them that are now getting that type are feeble and empty. Again, we don't want newspaper stories, or stories of the Canadian Northwest, or stories about substitutes, or political stories, or stories of the South, or stories of A.D. 2,000, or stories of the cow country, or stories about artists or authors: we believe that all of these have been overdone, and that civilized readers are tired of them. Yet again, we don't want plays in which, as the curtain rises, the heroine is explaining the plot into a telephone, or in which either burglars or married women come to the apartments of rich New York bachelors, or in which husbands come home unexpectedly to find their wives kissing their best friends: we believe that these, too, have been done to death. Yet again, we don't want anything "delightfully optimistic," whether in play form, in story form, or in any other form: we believe that the persons who enjoy such mush know where to get it, and that they do not look for it in *The Smart Set*.

True enough, some of the things in our *index expurgatorius* occasionally edge into the magazine, but that is only saying that we are weak mortals, and not as good editors as we ought to be. We take, as we say, the best that offers, and authors would help us a lot if they offered less commonplace and stupid stuff, and more novel, original, and lively stuff. Anything that is thoroughly

new is doubly welcome; we always try to give originality the right of way. Every other article in our code is subordinate to this one. If you have an idea that is genuinely new, The Smart Set is the place for it. But please don't try to fool us with old ones in false faces!

Some authors seem to have a notion that The Smart Set wants only society stories. Nothing could be more ridiculous. The magazine addresses itself, not merely to what are called (by the newspapers) society people, but to all persons who are well-fed, educated, worldly-wise, and of good taste. Naturally enough, these persons are more interested in their own class than they are in the struggles and aspirations of garment workers, pick-pockets, Pullman porters, pothouse politicians and missionaries to the heathen, and so the people of our stories are usually well-fed and worldly-wise, too, but we like to think that our readers put human interest and artistic value above mere milieu and point of view, and we'd print a new Mulvaney story, if we could get it, as gladly as we'd print a new Henry James story.

Our present chief need is for novelettes of from 15,000 to 25,000 words. A novelette, remember, is not a short novel but a long short story; its internal structure must be that of the short story; it must get under weigh, like a short story, in the very first paragraph. We desire a rapid dramatic

action in our novelettes, and after that, dialogue with wit in it. We are very hospitable in this department; we have printed detective stories, domestic comedies, stories of international society, stories of the *super-mac-rouge* Bohemia; we have even printed a novelette with an undertaker for its hero. But spare us the Eternal Triangle! It begins to crinkle and lose its shape. It has done service in too many bad novelettes. . .

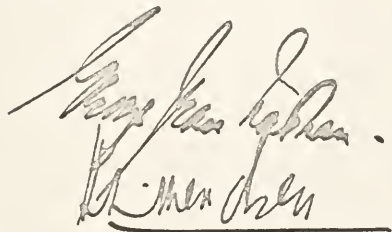
As for short stories, we have indicated some of our likes and dislikes, and a glance at the magazine will tell the rest of the tale. We desire, above all things, good workmanship. We send back many stories that, with interesting ideas in them, are crudely written. We believe that our readers have a sense of style, that they see the difference between a short story by Lord Dunsany or Lilith Benda and an ordinary short story. . . We use essays, too, and never have enough of them. But they must be essays that avoid the usual labored whimsicality and triteness of thought, and plough up some new ground. Here style is two-thirds of the battle. We'd make room any month for an essay that showed truly distinguished writing, no matter how much its doctrines outraged our private notions of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Poetry? We print twenty or thirty poems every month, and a good many of them get into the anthologies. But don't send us

sentimental things of the Poet's Corner variety; we are tired of odes to the meadow thrush, and war-songs arguing that the death of a soldier is a grief to his mother, and clumsy attempts at *vers libre*, and lyrics of amour in which "heart" rhymes with "part." . . .

Our short prose pieces, no doubt, you know; a dozen other magazines are imitating them. We want novelty, cleverness, good writing: a little prose poem, a piece of wit, a felicitous turn of phrase—above all, what we have never had before. And so with epigrams. Please don't send us puns, or platitudes, or cribs from Oscar Wilde. We have never had half enough good epigrams. . . .

In conclusion, there are two things for authors to remember. First, we employ no readers, and all manuscripts not downright impossible are read by one of the two of us. Secondly, we try to make every decision within a week, and every accepted manuscript is paid for immediately, without any regard to the date of publication.



Henry James

To Your Interest and for Our Convenience

- 1—Put your full name and address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your manuscript.
- 2—Enclose a fully stamped and self-addressed envelope.
- 3—See that your typist has ink on her ribbon. Faint manuscripts are very hard to read.
- 4—Don't write us unnecessary letters. Let your work speak for itself.
- 5—Send your manuscript by mail; *don't bring it!*
- 6—If you send in a novelette, attach a brief summary of the plot, say in 250 words.
- 7—Don't ask us for letters of criticism. We are too busy to write them.
- 8—Don't try to sell us anything until you have read two or three issues of the magazine from cover to cover, and so know something of our requirements.



